

## ***SLO Writing Guidelines: (July, 2015)***

### **1. Teacher Demographics**

The teacher demographics section includes the following basic information about your SLOs:

#### **Checklist Items**

- Fill out fields completely and accurately.

#### **Guiding Questions**

- To what course(s) does this SLO apply?
- Did I include all sections of identified course(s) for at least one of my SLOs? (Team SLOs must include all students.)

### **2. Student Demographics**

In this section, identify important attributes of your students as well as important contextual factors that may the students' ability to show growth. These steps include the following:

#### **Checklist Items**

- Identify appropriate type of SLO.
- Include an appropriate interval of instruction.
- Include the total number of students for the course in the SLO, consistent with the SLO type.<sup>1</sup>
- Identify number of students with IEPs and 504 plans (if applicable).
- Describe disabilities and accommodations of students comprehensively.<sup>2</sup>
- Include descriptions of English language learner (ELL), gifted and talented, and "other" students (if applicable).

#### **Guiding Questions**

- What important contextual factors do I want to note about my students?

### **3. Needs Assessment**

#### **Potential Data Sources:**

- Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA)
- SBAC/MEA
- Course grades
- Prior-year end-of-course assessment scores
- Pre-assessment data
- Portfolios
- PSAT/SAT scores
- Student work samples
- Student files
- Individualized education programs (IEPs), 504 plans, and other plans

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<sup>1</sup> [Explain requirements for the number of students included for each type of SLO for the course.]

<sup>2</sup> Indicate specific disabilities and accommodations along with the number of students; do not include student names.

In the needs assessment component, include a summary of the data you collected, describe your student population, and identify student strengths and weaknesses. This includes the following:

### **Checklist Items**

- Identify data reviewed about current students.
- Include areas of strength and need in relevant content or skill areas.
- Support each identified strength and need with relevant content- or skill-level student data.
- Demonstrate evidence of collaboration during data analysis, when possible.
- Refrain from using student names when describing students.

### **Guiding Questions**

- What sources of data are available to me? Data sources can include assessment scores as well as other information, such as behavioral data and observational data.
- Based on my analysis of multiple data and information sources, what are my students' strengths and needs?
- In what area(s) do my students need the most support and instruction?

### **Guidelines**

- Gather multiple sources of data. Consider all available resources to provide a comprehensive overview of your student group. (See earlier Potential Data Sources box for examples of types of evidence you might review, if available.)
- Analyze available data for areas of strength and need by subject area, student group, concepts, skills, and behaviors.
- When possible, collaborate with peers to analyze the data.
- When describing your students, refrain from using student names. For example, it is appropriate to say that you have three students identified with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and two students identified with pervasive developmental delays in your class, but it is not appropriate to identify these students by name. Protecting student confidentiality is critical.
- The SLOs must include a pre-assessment, as stipulated in proposed Maine state regulations.
  - The pre-assessment may be administered in the prior school year (e.g., an end-of-course examination given in June may serve as a pre-assessment for the course the following school year). However, in most cases, you should administer a pre-assessment at the beginning of the school year because it provides important data on current student performance.

- If you need to create a pre-assessment, follow the guidelines for [assessments](#) during assessment writing.

## 4. Standards

In this section, identify the standards that will be the focus of your SLO. Your selection of standards should be informed by the needs assessment:

### Checklist Items

- SLO addresses national or state standards appropriate for the subject
- Selected standards address essential areas of learning appropriate for the subject.
- Selected standards address a range of cognitive levels appropriate for the student group.
- Selected standards align with broader school and district goals.
- Selected standard(s) are broad enough to cover an extended interval of instruction, such as an academic year or semester.

### Guiding Questions

- Which standard(s) align with the need(s) identified in the needs assessment and student population component?
- Do the identified standards represent learning over the course of the interval of instruction?
- Do the identified standards align with the assessment in terms of depth and breadth?

### Guidelines

- The SLO must address national or state standards appropriate for the subject.
- The selected standard(s) must address essential areas of learning appropriate for the subject.
- The selected standard(s) must address a range of cognitive levels appropriate for the student group.
- The selected standard(s) should align with broader school and district goals.
- The selected standard(s) should be broad enough to cover an extended interval of instruction, such as an academic year or semester.

Pre-assessment/Post-assessment

In this section, identify and describe the assessment you will use to measure student growth. This assessment should align with your pre-assessment.<sup>3</sup> If you are using a teacher-created assessment, you must attach it to your SLO. As previously noted, data from the state-mandated standardized test (if available) will be used in all relevant content areas of the pre-assessment and post-assessment for at least one of the teacher's SLOs.

### Checklist Items

- Align to all of the standards identified in the Assessed Standards section
- Use appropriate format(s) for the selected standards and student population
- Provide all students with an opportunity to adequately demonstrate their knowledge and growth
- Contain a variety of question levels, rubric levels, and/or prompt types
- Measure individual student performance
- If applicable, attach a teacher-created summative assessment to the SLO
- Include a high-quality rubric and student prompts/instructions, if assessment is performance or rubric based
- Ensure that the assessment is free of bias, avoid unnecessarily complex language, and administer the assessment fairly and consistently to all students

### Guiding Questions

- What type of assessment will be most appropriate for assessing the identified standards?
- Is there an assessment I already use that assesses the standards identified in the previous section? If not, is there one already available that I could use?
- Do I need to create the assessment?
- Will this assessment permit all students to demonstrate growth?
- Is the assessment developmentally appropriate?
- Does this assessment contain a mix of question levels? For example, does this assessment focus simply on recall questions, or does it also require application of knowledge and higher order thinking?
- Is this assessment free from bias?
- Does this assessment contain appropriate language for students?

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<sup>3</sup> It is recommended that, when using teacher-created assessments, the pre-assessment and post-assessment be the same or in slightly different forms (e.g., same questions in a different order) of the same assessment. If the assessment is a vendor assessment, the pre-assessment and post-assessment may be different in accordance with test administration guidelines from the vendor.

- How will I administer this assessment fairly and consistently to students?
- Do the standards identified in the standards section of the SLO align with the assessment? If not, you must either select a different assessment or change the identified standards to match the assessment.

## **Guidelines**

All assessments must meet the following criteria:

- Align to all of the standards identified in the Assessed Standards section.
- Use appropriate format(s) for the selected standards and student population.
- Measure individual student performance.
- Provide accommodations and modifications for both the pre-assessment and post-assessment, as required in students' IEPs, 504 plans, ELL status, and other plans.
- Provide all students with an opportunity to adequately demonstrate their knowledge and growth.
- Contain a variety of question levels, rubric levels, and/or prompt types.
- Be administered similarly across classes within a district; if applicable, the post-assessment must be similar to the pre-assessment.
- Be graded consistently between administrations and classrooms with attention to validity/fairness.
- Already be used in the classroom whenever possible or, if new, be created through collaboration.
- Be free of bias, avoid unnecessarily complex language, and be administered fairly and consistently to all students.
- Not be graded by students.
- Be kept for at least one full year.

## **Performance-Assessment and Portfolio-Specific Guidelines**

- Attach both the performance assessment and the rubric.
- Include rubrics with all performance assessments. Include the following:
  - A minimum proficiency-level scale of 1 to 4
    - Recommended scale: 4 = exceeds proficiency, 3 = proficient, 2 = partially proficient, 1 = needs improvement
  - Specific, clear, and concise descriptions of each proficiency level
  - Positive, learner-appropriate language

- Use rubrics instructionally throughout the year unless they are content specific.
- Record performance assessments (audio or video as appropriate) whenever possible.

### **Test-Specific Guidelines**

- With some exceptions, tests may be administered at most twice per year (once as a pre-assessment and once as a post-assessment). Standardized assessments designed to be implemented multiple times throughout the year may be administered more than twice per year.
- Teachers may use questions similar to assessment questions during instruction, but they may use exact test questions only during testing.
- Teachers may complete answer documents for students only when this accommodation is listed on the student's IEP.

## **5. Growth Targets**

Growth targets specify the amount of growth expected from students during the interval of instruction. The measurements are as follows:

### **Checklist Items**

- Specify a quantitative growth or attainment target for each student on the roster.
- Use individual pre-assessment data to determine appropriate growth for each student.
- Uses a format required by the district or any appropriate format from the SLO handbook.
- Expect all students to demonstrate growth.
- Ensure targets are rigorous, attainable, and developmentally appropriate based on students' needs.
- Ensure targets appropriately consider minimum passing scores and typical growth associated with all ability levels.
- Attach the roster with all pre-assessment scores and target scores to the SLO.

### **Guiding Questions**

- What do I know about student learning or information from the test provider (if applicable)? What information can I use to inform my setting of growth targets? [These questions are about your prior experience in giving the assessment.]
- What have other teachers learned about growth from administering this assessment in the past?
- What is my rationale for setting these growth targets? How do I know that they are rigorous, attainable, and developmentally appropriate?

## Guidelines

- Specify a quantitative growth or attainment targets for each student on the roster.
- Use individual pre-assessment data to determine appropriate growth for each student.
- Use a format required by your district, or any appropriate format from the SLO handbook.
- Expect all students to demonstrate growth.
- Ensure targets are rigorous, attainable, and developmentally appropriate based on students' needs.
- Ensure targets appropriately consider minimum passing scores and typical growth associated with all ability levels.
- Attach the roster with all pre-assessment scores and target scores to the SLO.
- Follow state and district guidelines (see handbook) to ensure that SLO growth targets are rigorous, attainable, and developmentally appropriate. For example, if your district has a preferred growth target or provides a formula for setting growth targets, follow these guidelines.

Student growth targets may be formatted in a variety of ways. For examples of target formats, see [Appendix C](#).

## 6. Instructional Strategies and Progress Monitoring Plan

Strong instructional practices are the foundation for a successful SLO. In this section of the SLO template, describe the instructional strategies you intend to use throughout the school year to help students reach their growth targets as well as how you will monitor student progress. These steps include the following:

### Checklist Items

- Describe instructional strategies that appropriately consider student demographics and associated learning styles, ability levels, and student needs identified in the needs assessment (Section 3) and the standards (Section 4).
- Identify methods for monitoring student progress that are aligned to the SLO standards.
- Identify multiple ways the teacher will monitor student progress throughout the interval of instruction, including both formal and informal as well as short-term and long-term formative assessments/data as appropriate.
- Explain how the teacher will use progress data to inform instructional planning.

### Guiding Questions

- What instructional strategies have I used in the past that led to student growth?

- Are there other instructional strategies I can use to help students reach these growth targets?
- How will I know if students are making sufficient progress toward their targets?
- How will I use formative data to inform modifications to my instruction?
- How frequently will I collect formative data?



## Appendix A. SLO Template

For use with MSFE SLO Student Handbook, which provides additional guidance regarding minimum approval requirements and suggested practices.

Section 1: Teacher Demographics		
Teacher Name:	Position:	Date:
Subject:		Grade(s):

Section 2: Student Demographics	
Pre-assessment date: _____	Check one: ____ Individual ____ Team (shared student data)
Post-assessment date: _____	If team, list other teacher(s) included. _____
Course Type: ____ Year-long ____ Semester ____ Trimester Other _____	Number of students included in the SLO: _____ (Include all sections of course, if applicable.)
Number of students with following status: <i>Descriptions of students should be provided in list form to retain the anonymity (e.g., "one student has an identified reading disability, two students have identified learning disabilities in math, and one student has an identified hearing disability that requires auditory instructional supports").</i>	
____ 504 plans (Describe specific accommodations.) _____	
____ IEPs (Describe specific needs.) _____	
____ Gifted and talented (Describe.) _____	
____ ELL (Describe.) _____	
____ RTI interventions	
____ Title I (math)	
____ Title I (reading)	
____ Other (Describe.) _____	

### Section 3: Needs Assessment

What data did you review about the CURRENT students? (Check all that apply.)

- ☐ NWEA
- ☐ SBAC/MEA
- ☐ Grades
- ☐ Prior year, end of year assessment scores
- ☐ Preassessment data (other)
- ☐ Portfolios
- ☐ PSAT/SAT
- ☐ Student work samples
- ☐ Student files
- ☐ IEP, 504 plan, etc.
- ☐ Behavior
- ☐ Other

Summarize the areas of strength for the student population, referring to data sources. Support this with an analysis of student data at the appropriate skill or content level.

Summarize the areas of need for the student population, referring to data sources. Support this with an analysis of student data at the appropriate skill or content level.

Describe how you collaborated with other individuals to analyze student data when you developed your SLO.

### Section 4: Standards

What is (are) the source(s) of the standards (CCSS, MLR, ASCA, etc.)?

List all standards measured in your SLO assessment. Include both the identifier (standard number) and the description (text of the standard).

**Note:** The standards must address an essential area of need identified in the needs assessment & include process as well as content.

### Section 5: Pre-assessment/Post-assessment

\_\_\_\_\_Teacher created    \_\_\_Preapproved from menu

*Teacher-created assessments (with assessment blueprints) must be attached, when applicable.*

*High-quality scoring rubrics and student prompts should be attached, when applicable.*

If preapproved, identify the assessment(s) used.

If not preapproved, attach an electronic version of your assessment and answer the following questions: What type is it? What is the scale? If a rubric, how is it being scored? (If you attached an assessment blueprint, you may reference that document.)

### Section 6: Growth Targets

*Please attach a roster or table of student names, their pre-assessment scores, and their target scores.*

Identify the growth target formula or format that will be used for this SLO (See appendix in the SLO handbook).

Describe your rationale for selecting this growth target formula or format (include consideration of the minimum passing score, if applicable, such as with courses in which students enter with little to no prior knowledge).

## Section 7: Instructional Strategies and Progress Monitoring

What are two or three key strategies you will embed into instruction to specifically address the needs assessment (Section 3) and the variety of ability levels and learning styles represented in your student population (Section 2)? These strategies should include differentiation based on student need and relate directly to the selected standards (Section 4).

How will you monitor progress throughout the interval of instruction (consider both short and long term). Identify any specific formative assessment strategies you will use, how frequently you will monitor progress, and how you will document progress over time.

How will the progress-monitoring data you collect drive your instructional plans? Consider how different results might impact your decision to use or modify certain elements such as instructional strategies and student groupings.

Teacher Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Administrator Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix B: SLO Approval Checklist

Teacher Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Submission: \_\_\_\_\_

*For use with MSFE SLO Student Handbook, which provides additional guidance regarding minimum approval requirements and suggested practices.*

SLO Component	Evaluator Checklist
<b>Teacher Demographics</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Fill out fields completely and accurately
<b>Student Demographics</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify appropriate type of SLO <input type="checkbox"/> Include an appropriate interval of instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Include the total number of students for the course in the SLO, consistent with the SLO type <sup>4</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify number of students with IEPs and 504 plans (if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/> Describe disabilities and accommodations of students comprehensively <sup>5</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> Include descriptions of ELL, gifted and talented, and “other” students (if applicable)
<b>Needs Assessment</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify data reviewed about current students <input type="checkbox"/> Identify areas of strength and need in relevant content or skill areas <input type="checkbox"/> Support each identified strength and need with relevant content- or skill-level student data <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate evidence of collaboration during data analysis, when possible <input type="checkbox"/> Refrain from using student names when describing students
<b>Standards</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> SLO addresses national or state standards appropriate for the subject <input type="checkbox"/> Selected standards address essential areas of learning appropriate for the subject <input type="checkbox"/> Selected standards address a range of cognitive levels appropriate for the student group <input type="checkbox"/> Selected standards align with broader school and district goals <input type="checkbox"/> Selected standard(s) are broad enough to cover an extended interval of instruction, such as an academic year or semester

<sup>4</sup> Explain requirements for the number of students included for each type of SLO for the course

<sup>5</sup> Indicate specific disabilities and accommodations along with the number of students; do not include student names.

SLO Component	Evaluator Checklist
<b>Pre-assessment/ Post-assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Align to all of the standards identified in the Assessed Standards section</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use appropriate format(s) for the selected standards and student population</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide all students with an opportunity to adequately demonstrate their knowledge and growth</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Contain a variety of question levels, rubric levels, and/or prompt types</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Measure individual student performance</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If applicable, attach a teacher-created summative assessment to the SLO</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Include a high-quality rubric and student prompts/instructions, if assessment is performance or rubric based</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that the assessment is free of bias, avoid unnecessarily complex language, and administer the assessment fairly and consistently to all students</li> </ul>
<b>Growth Targets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Specify a quantitative growth or attainment target for each student on the roster</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use individual pre-assessment data to determine appropriate growth for each student</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Expect all students to demonstrate growth</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Uses a format required by the district or any of the formats from the SLO Handbook</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure targets are rigorous, attainable, and developmentally appropriate based on students' needs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure targets appropriately consider minimum passing scores and typical growth associated with all ability levels</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attach the roster with all pre-assessment scores and target scores to the SLO</li> </ul>
<b>Instructional Strategies and Progress Monitoring Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Describe instructional strategies that appropriately consider student demographics and associated learning styles, ability levels, and student needs identified in the needs assessment (Section 3) and the standards (Section 4)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Identify methods for monitoring student progress that are aligned to the SLO standards</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Identify multiple ways the teacher will monitor student progress throughout the interval of instruction, including both formal and informal as well as short-term and long-term formative assessments/data as appropriate</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Explain how the teacher will use progress data to inform instructional planning</li> </ul>



## Appendix C. Sample Formats for Growth Targets

When setting growth targets, teachers use baseline and pretest data to set developmentally appropriate expectations for students on the summative assessment. Teachers should follow state and district guidelines to ensure that SLO growth targets are rigorous, attainable, and developmentally appropriate. Growth targets should be informed by the teacher's knowledge of students, content, and assessment. All students, regardless of their preassessment score, should be expected to demonstrate significant and appropriate growth.

Student growth targets may be formatted in a variety of ways. The following are sample formats, but not the only formats, for growth targets. All examples listed below have benefits and limitations. Please review your student data closely and select a format with care.

### Growth Target Format 1: Expected Growth in Points

All students will increase their preassessment score by 18 points on the postassessment.

#### *Potential Strengths of This Format*

- Clear, uniform expectations for all students.
- Each student's growth target will be based on his or her preassessment rating. For example, a student with a rating of 50 on the preassessment would be expected to increase his or her rating to 68; another student with a rating a 62 would be expected to increase his or her rating to 80.

#### *Limitations or Considerations to This Format*

- Assumes that it is developmentally appropriate to expect all students to demonstrate the same amount of growth.
- Assumes that 18 points is "typical" growth, though it is not clear that 18 points is "typical" for any or all students in the class.
- Assumes that the assessment design allows for the same amount of growth throughout the scale (that an 18-point movement from 20 to 38 is the same as movement from 52 to 70).



## Growth Target Format 2: Differentiated Growth in Points

Baseline Score (Out of 100)	Growth Target
35–50	Increase baseline score by 20 points
51–70	Increase baseline score by 18 points
71–82	Increase baseline score by 16 points

### *Strengths of This Format*

- Tiered targets enable teachers to differentiate expectations for students based on what is developmentally appropriate.
- Each student's growth target will be based on his or her preassessment rating. For example, a student with a rating of 50 on the preassessment would be expected to increase his or her rating to 68; another student with a rating of 62 would be expected to increase his or her rating to 80.

### *Limitations or Considerations to This Format*

- Assumes that it is developmentally appropriate to expect all students to demonstrate the same amount of growth.
- Assumes that 16, 18, and 20 points are “typical” growth for these students, though it is not clear that this level of growth is “typical” for any or all students in the class.
- Assumes that the assessment design allows for similar amounts of growth throughout the scale (that a 20-point movement from 35 to 55 is the same as movement from 50 to 70).

## Growth Target Format 3: Differentiated Cut Scores

Baseline Score (Out of 100)	Growth Target Score (Out of 100)
35–50	59
51–70	79
71–82	91

### *Strengths of This Format*

- Tiered targets enable teachers to differentiate expectations for students based on what is developmentally appropriate.

### *Limitations or Considerations to This Format*

- Depending on how the targets are structured, expectations around the cut points vary and can be arbitrary. In the example above, students with

- It is easy to determine each individual student's growth target because no calculation is needed.

ratings of 50 need to increase their ratings only to 59, but students with ratings of 51 need to increase their ratings to 79.

#### Growth Target Format 4: Advanced-Tiered Target

Preassessment Score	Growth Score
0–45 points	65 or +35 points, whichever is greater
46–70 points	75 or +15 points, whichever is greater
70+ points	85 or + 20 points, whichever is greater

##### *Strengths of This Format*

- Tiered targets enable teachers to differentiate expectations for students based on what is developmentally appropriate.
- This format attempts to reduce the variation in expectations around the cut scores seen in Growth Target Format 3.

##### *Limitations or Considerations to This Format*

- It is more difficult to determine each individual student's growth target.

#### Growth Target Format 5: Individual Targets

Student Number	Baseline Score (Out of 100)	Growth Target Score (Out of 100)
1234	50	75
5678	25	50
9012	25	55
3456	34	54
7899	60	85

##### *Strengths of This Format*

- This format articulates a specific growth target for each student.

##### *Limitations or Considerations to This Format*

- Growth targets are not the same across students. To ensure that teachers are not “cherry-picking” students, it may be

- This format enables teachers to adjust targets for individual students based on what they know about the individual student.

important to require teachers to include reasons why expectations for two students with the same preassessment score are different.

### **Growth Target Format 6: Formula**

All students will increase their scores by one half the difference between 100 and the preassessment score. For example, a student who received a rating of 50 on the preassessment would be expected to receive a rating of 75 on the postassessment.

#### *Strengths of This Format*

- If assessments are formatted and scaled differently across teachers, a uniform approach like a formula may not be appropriate.

#### *Limitations or Considerations to This Format*

- Assumes students who begin with more knowledge and skill will demonstrate less growth in their score than their peers.
- Assumes that the assessments are developed on a 100-point scale.
- Assumes that proficiency is not a requirement for some students.
- Assumes that half the distance is an appropriate target.

## Appendix D. Questions to Inform SLO Conversations

These questions are intended to guide conversations. They are not intended to be protocols.

- Did student performance of the SLO on the postassessment meet your expectations in the SLO targets?
- What do you think contributed to these results?
- How might you use the SLO results to inform your goals for next year?
- Which colleagues could you learn from, either through discussions or observations, about helping students meet these standards?
- Which colleagues could you support with the lessons you learned from this year?
- Did any students greatly exceed their targets? Do those students have common characteristics (e.g., baseline performance, gifted and talented or special education status, or students who received interventions)?
- Which students did not meet their growth targets? Do those students have common characteristics?
- How could you use these results to inform goals, instruction, and professional learning plans for next year?

# Appendix E. SLOs: Frequently Asked Questions

*Last update: May, 2015*

## General Questions

### **Q. Why is the SLO template and approval checklist different from those used in 2014–15?**

A. After a year of using the SLO framework, the 35 member cross-district SLO Workgroup reconvened in May 2015 to reflect on and refine the template and approval checklist.

### **Q. Do all teachers have to have two student learning and growth measures?**

A. Yes. According to the Rule that governs State law (Chapter 508 of Title 20-A of the Maine Revised Statutes) “multiple measures of student learning and growth must be used for each educator being evaluated.” When it becomes available, data from the State mandated standardized test will be used in relevant content areas for the pre- and post-assessment for at least one of the two required SLOs.

### **Q. Who approves SLOs?**

A. District-determined administrators or administrator teams review and approve SLOs.

### **Q: To what extent may a district or school administrator mandate components of the SLO (assessment tools, growth targets, content area, etc.)?**

A. MSFE recognizes the importance of balancing overall requirements with district and school needs and trusts its educators to use their professional judgment to make informed decisions. The SLO Framework outlines specific decisions that districts can make related to the SLO process. In some cases, districts may allow school administrators to also make certain decisions related to the SLO process.

### **Q: Can the district require the use of team SLOs with shared attribution or another collective measure of student growth?**

A. Districts may require one of the SLOs to be a team SLO with shared attribution of students. According to State law (Chapter 508 of Title 20-A of the Maine Revised Statutes), “In recognition that a student’s academic achievement may be affected by teachers other than the student’s teacher of record, a PE/PG system may include academic achievement of students outside the teacher’s instructional cohort. Any use of such collective measures must: A) Be agreed to by teachers to whom it will be applied, under the agreement process set forth in the PE/PG system plan; and B) Comprise not more than one-fourth of the total student growth measure.” Otherwise, the administrator or administrative team might set parameters for the SLO based on building or district priorities.

### **Q. Is a growth target similar to an IEP goal?**

A. SLO growth targets and IEPs are similar in that they both are goals for students designed to meet student need using baseline data. SLO growth targets can be differentiated for students, but they are different from individualized education programs (IEPs) or individual student goals in that a whole course or classroom of students is targeted and assessed.

**Q. Does a teacher have to write an SLO for each course taught?**

A. No. The teachers' two SLOs might involve different courses; but there is no requirement to have an SLO for each course.

**Q. In 2015–16, if a teacher writes two SLOs for the same course or class of students, can the standards in the two SLOs overlap?**

A. No, if the same group of students is included in two SLOs, the content of the two SLOs should differ. For example, a teacher cannot have one SLO that focuses on all the informational text standards for her Grade 4 reading students and then a second, targeted SLO that focuses on the craft and structure subset of informational text standards with eight of her Grade 4 reading students - this would result in the teacher being doubly rewarded or penalized for those eight students' growth on craft and structure informational text standards.

**Q. If the teacher provides instruction for multiple courses, how does the teacher select the course for the SLO?**

A. Districts and schools may specify the courses for which teachers should write SLOs. Principals will have discretion over whether they advise teachers to select a course with the most sections or a course with the greatest student needs. In general, teachers with multiple courses should consider writing an SLO for a core subject before a noncore subject or elective course.

**Q. What is the average page length of an SLO?**

A. The length of the SLO is not a relevant factor. Administrators will review SLOs for the quality of the content—not the length of the document. Teachers should use the SLO checklist to ensure that the SLO contains all the required information needed for approval.

**Q. What if students in the student population are absent frequently? Will they be excluded from the calculation of the SLO score?**

A. Section 7 of the proposed state regulations (<http://www.msmaweb.com/Stories/proposed-language.pdf>) stipulates that students may be included in measures only if they are present “80% of the scheduled instructional time for that course or learning experience with that teacher.” It is strongly recommended that teachers clearly document student absences throughout the year.

**Q. Are there instances when students will be excluded from an SLO because of unique circumstances?**

A. Administrators may use their professional judgment and determine whether a student should be excluded from calculations of the SLO score. That said, teachers are responsible for identifying a student as eligible for exclusion and discussing that student with administrators

prior to the administration of the post-assessment. After the post-assessment has been administered and during the SLO scoring conversation, a teacher may request an exemption and the administrator will use professional judgment to determine whether that student should be excluded from the SLO score calculation. Students may be eligible for exclusion in the following circumstances:

- The student was absent for 20 percent or more of the interval of instruction. State regulation stipulates that students can be included in student growth measures only if they are present for 80 percent or more of the instruction that occurs between the pre-assessment and post-assessment. Students who do not meet this criterion **must** be excluded from the SLO scoring. This also pertains to students who joined the course late and were not present for 80 percent of the interval of instruction.
- The student experienced a significant disruption in his or her education. Circumstances include but are not limited to homelessness, extended illness, change in foster care, natural disaster, and death in the family.
- The student is in his or her first year of ESL status.

**Q. How do I write SLOs as a teacher of students with special needs?**

A. Teachers of students with special needs will follow the same SLO guidelines and procedures as other teachers. All teachers, including but not limited to those working with students with special needs, will consider the unique needs of students when selecting standards, identifying an appropriate assessment, and setting growth targets. Teachers of students with special needs are encouraged to include relevant student background information in the Student Demographics and needs assessment section of the SLO to help evaluators understand the classroom context and how that informed the growth targets.

**Q. How do teachers in alternative settings develop SLOs?**

A. Teachers in alternative settings often work in unique situations that may make it difficult to set a meaningful goal for a single group of students for an extended period of time. Teachers in such settings should work with districts and administrators to determine a solution that will make sense with the configuration of their classes and the degree of turnover in their student population. For example, a teacher in alternative setting may need to set growth targets for a particular group of students for a shorter period of time than a semester.

## **Needs Assessment**

**Q. Do teachers have to administer a pre-assessment?**

A. Yes, regulations specify that student growth must be based upon growth between a pre-assessment and a post-assessment. The pre-assessment does not, however, have to be administered in the current school year. The pre-assessment could be an end-of-course assessment from the prior year.

**Q. Should teachers consider only data from standardized tests when conducting a needs assessment?**

A. The creation of SLOs should be informed by data from multiple data sources, including but not limited to standardized tests, portfolios of student work, and district-created assessments.

**Q. Can teachers use data that is two or three years old in the needs assessment?**

A. Yes. Trend data can provide valuable information. Data on how current students have performed in the past can alert teachers to areas where students have persistently struggled over time. In addition, data on how students historically perform in the teacher's class can help the teacher identify important content or skills that the teacher might want to focus on during the year. However, growth targets should be set based on recent preassessment data, not solely historical or trend data.

**Q. Can a teacher use words like “most,” “several,” and so on when describing students?**

A. These terms can be open to interpretation, and so, whenever possible, use specific numbers and reference specific data.

**Q. Can teachers exclude students from the SLO?**

A. The student population of the SLO should include all students in that course. In rare cases, a school administrator may exclude students for extenuating circumstances.

**Q. Should teachers include student names in the SLO?**

A. Teachers should maintain the privacy of their students when possible. It is acceptable to summarize your students' needs overall, but not to call attention to specific students. For example, a teacher may mention that she or he has three students with IEPs (dyslexia, emotional disturbance, and concomitant disorders) and two homeless students, but the teacher cannot say that John, Mary, and Skylar have IEPs and that Lisa and Eric are homeless.

## **Standards**

**Q. What is the difference between a process standard and a content standard?**

A. Process standards describe skills that students should develop or refine. Content standards describe specific learning. SLOs should identify both process and content standards. Teachers must include standard(s) that address both process and content.

## **Summative or Postassessment**

**Q. What types of assessments can we use in our SLO?**

A. Assessments used in SLOs can be pencil-and-paper tests or performance tasks graded with rubrics. Assessments can be vendor-created or teacher-created, but all assessments should follow the guidelines for assessments.



**Q. Do teachers need to attach copies of the assessment to the SLO?**

A. Teachers must include a copy of any non-standardized assessments with the SLO when they submit it for approval, unless the assessment has been preapproved by the district.

**Q. Do teachers need to describe the assessments they use throughout the year with students?**

A. Not in the summative assessment portion of the SLO. Teachers who use formative assessments to assess student progress in the content and skills in the SLO can describe these assessments in the progress monitoring section of the SLO template.

**Q. How do we assess students with disabilities?**

A. Assessments should be designed to assess as many students as possible. In most cases, students with disabilities should be assessed using the same assessment as students without disabilities. All students with individualized education programs and 504 plans should receive the modifications and accommodations specified on those plans.

## **Growth Targets**

**Q. How do teachers set growth targets for their lowest-performing students?**

A. All targets should be developmentally appropriate. Expecting a student to demonstrate three years' worth of growth in one year may be very difficult and not developmentally appropriate. Teachers may need to set a goal for a student that is below what is considered "proficient" in order to ensure that the goal is developmentally appropriate for the student. In some cases, however, more than a year's worth of growth is both possible and necessary to close the achievement gap. When determining appropriate growth targets, teachers should consult with colleagues, curriculum directors, administrators, special educators, and instructional coaches.

**Q. Can teachers revise the growth targets after the SLO has been approved?**

A. Teachers may revise growth targets only in extenuating circumstances. Districts have discretion to determine whether a teacher may or may not revise growth targets. Sample extenuating circumstances are changes in teaching assignments, changes in student population, maternity or extenuated leave, natural disasters, and extensive storm days. Any changes to the SLO growth targets after the SLO has been approved must be made prior to the midpoint of the course and be approved by a school administrator